

# ALFA International Overview

ALFA International is the oldest and one of the largest legal networks. ALFA International was founded in 1980 and operated for more than 20 years as the American Law Firm Association. Reflecting its growing international membership, the organization changed its name to ALFA International in 2002. Founded in Buffalo, New York, ALFA International moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1980's. In November of 2002, ALFA International moved to Chicago where the organization is now based

## Organization and Structure

ALFA International is a membership organization and a non-profit corporation. Generally resembling a trade association, ALFA International is a network of independently owned and operated law firms. ALFA International does not itself engage in the practice of law, set or collect legal fees, or compensate any member firm for legal services. ALFA International is governed by a 16-member Board of Directors, each director practicing law for one of the member firms. Day-to-day operations are conducted by a full-time staff of eight employees.

## Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the ALFA International organization are many and varied. At least three drive participation in the organization for many members and their clients. First, ALFA International seeks to provide its members and their clients with a network of outstanding law firms, thereby eliminating the risks associated with retaining counsel in unfamiliar jurisdictions. ALFA International law firms maintain offices in virtually every major metropolitan area in the United States and many countries around the World. Second, ALFA International facilitates the pooling of resources among its member firms. On virtually a daily basis, ALFA International law firms are assisting one another in many ways, including the exchange of legal research, the provision of expert referrals, and advice and recommendations based upon prior experience. Finally, member firms help one another on issues relating to firm management. Since only one firm is admitted to membership for each geographic area, members willingly assist other members in strengthening their practices.

## Membership Profile

ALFA International's membership is comprised of 145 law firms around the World. Over 9,000 lawyers are employed by these firms, assisted by another 10,000 support personnel. Most member firms maintain broad general practices. Every member firm has a significant trial or litigation practice. The ALFA International website ([www.alfainternational.com](http://www.alfainternational.com)) contains a locator device to find ALFA International firms by city, state, or country.

ALFA International's U.S. membership includes 85 law firms. Our American membership maintains offices in virtually all of the 100 largest metropolitan areas within the United States. Many branch offices are also operated in smaller cities. Our international membership is presently comprised of 60 law firms practicing in more than 60 countries. While U.S. membership will probably remain relatively constant, ALFA International hopes to expand international membership significantly in the coming years.



## Membership Requirements

ALFA International admits one member for each defined geographical area which may be a metropolitan area, a section of a state, or an entire state. With a few exceptions, our international members are appointed to represent ALFA International throughout an entire country. This type of exclusivity promotes more cooperation and sharing among our members and minimizes counterproductive rivalries.

The membership selection process is a rigorous one. The ALFA International Membership Committee solicits input from present members, clients, and various contacts within the search city or country. Publicly available state bar or national bar records are also reviewed for any relevant information regarding the performance of the candidate. Each candidate is required to complete a comprehensive application and submit to a series of interviews with the Membership Committee. In most cases, representatives from the Membership Committee will visit the offices of the candidate. At the conclusion of this process, the Membership Committee will undertake substantial discussions regarding a candidacy and ultimately vote on admission.

Once admitted to membership, ALFA International firms must satisfy an array of performance requirements. Each member must attend certain key meetings and join at least two Practice Groups (see discussion below). The caliber of legal work performed by members on matters referred by other members is closely monitored. Each member is expected to fully comply with all professional and ethical standards in its respective jurisdiction. The ALFA International Board is empowered to expel a member for failing to satisfy these and other performance requirements.

## Practice Groups

ALFA International's Practice Groups are the "heart and soul" of the ALFA International organization. The Practice Groups focus on one substantive area of law and allow ALFA International lawyers around the United States and the World to exchange information, assist one another, and jointly develop educational programs for clients and lawyers. At the present time, ALFA International maintains Practice Groups for the following subject matter areas: Products Liability, Transportation, Labor & Employment, Workers Compensation, Retail, Business Litigation, IP/Technology, Healthcare, Construction, Insurance, Employee Benefits, Bankruptcy and International Law. Other Practice Groups are under consideration.

The ALFA International Practice Groups undertake a wide range of activities. ALFA International lawyers within each Practice Group monitor developments in the law, both state and federal, and circulate news to all participating lawyers. Each Practice Group supports an on-line "clearinghouse" so that lawyers may seek and receive assistance from other members in providing legal services to their clients. Virtually every Practice Group publishes a collection of reference materials for ALFA International lawyers and clients, including compendia, 50-state surveys, digests, and manuals. Pre-eminent among the Practice Group activities is the design and presentation of one, two, and three-day

seminars which focus on timely legal topics and provide forums for information exchange and networking. The referral of legal work is also facilitated by the Practice Groups to insure that ALFA International clients receive excellent service in distant and unfamiliar jurisdictions.

Many of the Practice Groups maintain Client Advisory Boards. These boards are comprised of clients who retain many ALFA International law firms. Members of the Client Advisory Boards provide the Practice Groups with suggestions regarding the topics and formats for future seminars. They also provide input on the types of legal publications they find most helpful. Many of the Client Advisory Board members serve as speakers and panelists during Practice Group seminars. The Practice Groups frequently solicit comments from their Client Advisory Boards regarding the level of legal service provided by ALFA International law firms.

### **Client Benefits**

Clients enjoy many benefits from retaining ALFA International law firms. ALFA International provides its clients with access to a vast network of outstanding lawyers, eliminating the risks associated with hiring counsel in unfamiliar jurisdictions. Each member firm may draw upon the resources of the entire membership in servicing its clients, thereby exploiting certain expertise and specialties that are not typically found in every individual law firm. Clients may also participate in a broad array of educational programs, including on-site seminars, tele-seminars, on-line newsletters, and ALFA International presentations at various trade association events. In conjunction with these programs, ALFA International clients receive many legal reference materials (compendia, digests, manuals, etc.) which frequently prove to be indispensable in clients' day-to-day handling of legal issues. Finally, clients have the opportunity to network with other companies that deal with similar legal challenges, helping the client to develop a "best practices" approach.

### **The Future of ALFA International**

In charting the future of ALFA International, five principles will guide the organization. First, ALFA International will strive to recruit the best law firms as candidates for new memberships. Second, ALFA International will attempt to realize the full potential of its members by implementing rigorous performance standards regarding the participation and contribution of each member. Third, our efforts will continue to increase and improve the pooling of resources among members in insure clients receive the best in legal services. Fourth, ALFA International will remain committed to exploring and testing new educational programs for its clients and members. Finally, ALFA International members will never take clients' business for granted.

### **Comments, Questions, and Additional Information**

Comments, questions, and requests for additional information may be directed to any ALFA International member firm. Our website at [www.alfainternational.com](http://www.alfainternational.com) provides further detail and description of the ALFA International organization. You may also contact the ALFA headquarters by phone, fax, e-mail, or U.S. mail as listed below.

#### **ALFA International**

980 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 1180, Chicago, IL 60611

312-642-2532 (phone), 312-642-5346 (fax)

[rhetke@alfainternational.com](mailto:rhetke@alfainternational.com)

**ALFA** INTERNATIONAL

THE GLOBAL LEGAL NETWORK